

Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the 27th meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council (2011 – 2015 Session) held on Tuesday 3rd December 2013 at 8:00 p.m. in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

Present:	Mr J Forgham	Chairman
	Mr R Gregory)
	Mr G Pearson)
	Mrs C Piccolo) Councillors
	Mrs M Wilkinson)
	Mr G Williamson)
	Ms W Woodgate)

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and **26** members of the public.

27.1. Public session.

The Chairman proposed that the fruit trees planted at the allotment be dealt with first. He would allow one resident from either side of the dispute three minutes to present their case before the Council decided the issue.

Speaking in favour of the trees, Mr Andrew Pyatt said there was no hidden agenda. He and Mr Christopher Sitton, who had planted the fruit trees, had wanted to create a nice place for everyone to enjoy.

Speaking for the allotment holders, Mr Mike Smith said his major concern was how the trees came to be planted and whether they should be there at all. The site was in a conservation area and had been allocated for allotments and there was a waiting list for plots. Conservation regulations were flouted at the Council's peril. Mr Smith noted the hedge on the site had been cut down without consent from the Council or the EHC Conservation Officer. He thought a number of trees had been large enough to have needed Conservation Area consent before being cut down. Mr Smith thought the trees had been planted by the two neighbouring residents for their own reasons. There was no enthusiasm for a community orchard from other residents in the parish. If the aim was to benefit the community the trees should be redistributed around the parish. Mr Smith said that, apparently, the trees were to be maintained by those who had wrongly planted them. Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.

Mr Sitton said that the hedge had needed coppicing – he claimed that he had consent to cut the hedge. He said that the land on which he had planted the fruit trees had never been intended to be used for allotments and he had been given permission to plant the trees. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that only half a dozen trees at one end had been spoken of not twenty four trees filling the area.

The Chairman then called on the Council to discuss the Allotments issue on the agenda.

27.2. Allotments

27.2.1. To consider appointing an Allotment manager. The Chairman said the management of the allotments had been too casual. He proposed the Council should appoint a management committee. Cllr Williamson thought a committee was a sound idea. The Chairman proposed that the management committee should consist of two allotment holders and a councillor with the Clerk to give advice. Agreed – Cllr Mrs Piccolo abstained. Cllr Gregory said that the first thing to decide would be to agree a constitution. The Chairman said the rules used by allotments in Bishop's Stortford would be a good start. Cllrs Mrs Wilkinson and Mrs Piccolo agreed to sit on the committee. The Chairman said he would obtain the names and contact details of the allotment holders so that the

Action
JF

committee could meet within ten days. The committee could deal with matters of raising the rent and a possible noticeboard.

27.2.2.

To consider how to use the grassed area at the SE end of the allotment site. The Chairman said that he wanted to place on record that he had been abused by a number of residents over the matter including someone who had refused to leave his home despite the fact that he had visitors. Cllr Gregory said he was surprised to hear of residents behaving so badly – it must have been a distressing incident for the Chairman. He thought the Chairman had always been impartial and objective on the matter.

Cllr Ms Woodgate thought the Council had not really been on the ball over the subject. Councillors had agreed to some trees by email but had not agreed on the number subsequently planted.

Cllr Williamson said that if the Council had considered the planting of the trees before they had been planted he would have agreed. He thought the fruit trees should remain as they were. Mrs Wilkinson thought the work had been well done and it would be vandalism to pull them up.

Cllr Ms Woodgate said the longstanding dispute between the allotment holders and the neighbours needed to be addressed.

Cllr Gregory said he did not agree. He thought everyone had acted in good faith in agreeing a small number of trees for a redundant part of the site. However, he had not expected the large number of trees that had been planted. He was unsure of the status of the orchard – no rent was being paid. He thought the land should be used for allotments.

Cllr Ms Woodgate said the land had never been used as allotments and wondered why there was uproar now.

Cllr Mrs Piccolo said it was a matter of principle. The Council had not agreed to an orchard. There were residents waiting for allotments and she thought the Council was letting the community down. She thought that most of the community was in agreement that the area should be used for allotments.

Cllr Williamson said that residents had put in time, money and effort on what they believed had been agreed with the Parish Council. Cllr Pearson said that the Council had discussed using the land for allotments but no action had been taken because of services under the land. The Clerk said that Mr Pyatt had the right for his services to run under the land and had asked the Council to sign an agreement that it would be responsible for any damage that might occur to them. The Clerk said that his advice was that the Council should take care to avoid damage but that he thought Mr Pyatt had a responsibility to ensure that the services were not as shallow as to be damaged by gardening and to inform the Council as to where the services ran. The fact that Mr Pyatt was happy for trees to be planted on the land showed his concerns might be exaggerated.

Cllr Mrs Piccolo said the land had been allocated for allotments. Cllr Gregory said that EHC had agreed that the Council could decide whether to use it for allotments or an orchard.

The Chairman said there were concerns about the ownership of the trees and the land. He referred to a letter from Mr Pyatt saying the trees had been given to the community and making no reference to a claim to the land. The Chairman said the Allotment Management Committee would have to deal with pruning the trees and cutting the grass.

Cllr Gregory asked if the waiting list for allotments predated the planting of the trees. The Chairman said they occurred at about the same time. He said he had met Mr Sitton with Cllr Mrs Wilkinson and explained that the orchard was not what he had agreed. He had expected only 10 or 12 trees. The thanks in the

Parish News had been in anticipation of this small number.

Cllr Mrs Piccolo asked if there was not a middle way in which some of the land was used for fruit trees.

Cllr Williamson proposed that the Council accept the trees as a community orchard on the condition that Mr Sitton and Mr Pyatt were willing to sign a document that stated they had no further interest in the land or the hedge and that they were clearly donating the trees to the Council. Cllr Mrs Wilkinson seconded the proposal. The Council agreed though Cllrs Mrs Piccolo and Gregory voted against.

The Chairman temporarily closed the meeting at 8:58 p.m. and reopened it at 9:06 p.m. after the Planning Committee meeting.

27.3. Absent. None.

27.4. Declarations of interest. The Chairman said that a resident had claimed that he and Cllr Williamson should withdraw from the discussion on the allotments as they were friends of Mr Sitton. The Chairman said he and Cllr Williamson were friendly with many residents. He said that they had consulted Mr Geoff Hughes, Head of Democratic & Legal Support Services at EHC, who had advised that no interest needed to be declared although he advised explaining why which had done.

27.5. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 5th November 2013 had been previously circulated. The minutes were agreed as accurate.

27.6. Matters arising from the minutes. The Chairman said that the total costs for running the playgrounds had been forwarded to the resident who had asked for them.

27.7. Budget for 2014/15

27.7.1. To consider the draft budget. The Chairman said he and Cllr Gregory had met the Clerk and prepared the draft budget that had been circulated to councillors. The Chairman said that the Village Hall had contacted the Clerk concerning the disposal of rubbish from the parish bins. The Hall would have to hire a larger bin to take the extra rubbish and had asked the Council to make a donation of £234 p.a. from January 2014 to cover the extra cost. Cllr Gregory said that the Hall should make its annual accounts available for inspection. Cllr Williamson agreed to enquire. Cllr Mrs Piccolo asked whether a donation should be made to the Much Hadham Forge Museum. The Chairman said he thought Much Hadham PC should take the lead.

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GW

The Chairman proposed that, with the addition of the donation to the Village Hall, the budget be adopted for 2014/15. Agreed.

Action
Clerk

27.7.2. To agree the precept for 2014/15. Cllr Gregory was concerned at the size of the monies being carried forward. The Council needed to work on a project for improving the parish. The Chairman proposed that the precept for 2014/15 be unchanged at £12,800. Agreed. The precept claim forms were signed.

27.8. Playgrounds.

27.8.1. Broken fence post at the Ridgeway and the repairs required following the latest playground inspection. Cllr Williamson said Mr Foskett had submitted a quotation for £780. This would include replacing the fence at the north end of the Village Hall playground with a post and rail fence. This would dispense with the dangerous barbed wire. It was agreed to accept the quotation.

Action
GW

- 27.8.2.** Hedge cutting. The Clerk said Greenman planned to cut the hedges in early December.
- 27.9. Road matters.**
- 27.9.1.** Consultation on HCC 20mph strategy. The Chairman said he had submitted a response including a note about the dangers of bicycles overtaking cars in 20 mph areas.
- 27.9.2.** Potholes. The Chairman said he still working to get some holes repaired – particularly the sunken manhole cover on Acremore Street. Action JF
- 27.9.3.** Vehicles from the side roads jumping the A120 lights. The Chairman said there had been no developments. The new traffic lights seemed to be working normally.
- 27.9.4.** Hedges outside ‘Houghtons’. The Chairman said that PCSO Karen Broad was dealing with the matter.
- 27.9.5.** Siting of the village sign outside Ash Valley Golf Course and the reflective posts in Chapel Lane. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said she the village sign had been installed though she would chase up the reflective posts. Action CP
- 27.9.6.** Distribution of salt for use on frozen paths. Cllr Pearson said he had received 34x25kg bags of road salt from HCC. Volunteers were required to treat affected paths in their areas. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said she would include a notice in the Parish News. Action CP/GP
- 27.9.7.** Temporary closure of part of Chapel Lane. The Chairman noted the closure for installing gas mains to the former chapel hall was now over.
- 27.9.8.** To consider planting bulbs in the planters and round village signs. The Chairman said £30 had been included in the budget and he would plant some bulbs soon. Action JF
- 27.10. Footpaths.**
- 27.11.** Condition of footpaths. The chairman said most of the fallen trees, caused by the recent gale, had been cleared.
- 27.12.** Footpath between Albury Road and the church – hand rail on the bridge and overgrown hedge on Albury Road reducing visibility. The chairman said he had reported the matter to Mr Maddex, HCC Footpaths officer.
- 27.13.** Damaged stile opposite South Cottages. The Chairman said the stile had been repaired. Mr Maddex said he might install a kissing gate if the landowners consent could be obtained.
- 27.14. Flooding.**
- 27.14.1.** Preparations for the multi-agency meeting in January 2014. The Chairman said that he was still waiting for the minutes of the previous meeting. The new meeting was planned for the end of January 2014. Action JF
- 27.15. Bury Green**
- 27.15.1.** Tidying the Bury Green pond. The Chairman said the work party had cleared the scrub and cleared some weed from the pond. Unfortunately the gale had brought down some branches. He asked for volunteers to clear them. Action JF

27.16. Westland Green

27.16.1. Repairs to the byroad. The Chairman said that work would start on Monday 9th December 2013. A hard core base would be laid to prevent vehicles sinking into soft ground. The land would be reinstated over the base and posts would be erected to keep vehicles from driving onto the rest of the green.

27.17. NHS report. There was nothing to report.

27.18. Parish Plan Group.

27.18.1. The Group had no plans for this year but was working on the event to commemorate the start of the Great War.

27.19. Chairman's report.

27.19.1. To consider discussions with the Village Hall Committee to concerning the current provision of sound and lighting facilities. Cllr Gregory said there was nothing to report.

27.19.2. THE Chairman said that Mr Pat Gough was in hospital. He wished him a speedy recovery.

27.20. Clerk's Report**27.20.1. Financial statement****Period ending 3rd December 2013**

Barclay's Bank C/Acc		£16,979.35
StepSaver BP Acc		£5.19
BP Acc		£170.22
Petty cash		£17.91
	Total	£17,172.67

Uncleared cheque

Royal British Legion	£25.00
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Received

Allotment rent	£20.00
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To be agreed**To Pay**

Mr B Evans	P/Clerk - November & December	£637.52	
	Exp November	£26.20	£663.72
Karin Green Garden Services	Grass cutting November & December		£100.00
Mr A Purvis	Litter picker November		£111.80
HM Revenue & Customs	PAYE		£239.20
SLCC	Subscription		£101.00
Little Hadham School	Donation		£250.00
Little Hadham Pantomime Group	Donation		£250.00
Mrs C Piccolo	Refreshments		£16.96
Mr A Purvis	Litter picking December		£111.80
	Total payments		£1,844.48

Total in all accounts and petty cash after payment of this month's bills £15,323.19

27.20.2. Proposed to accept payment of accounts. Agreed.

27.20.3. Proposed to accept the accuracy of the financial statement. Agreed.

27.21. Democratic 10 minutes.

A resident asked for some of the Council reserves be used to pay for the cutting of the grass at Bury Green. The Chairman said it would be on the next agenda. A resident asked how accurately the byroad would be marked. The Chairman said Mr Maddex would take care to follow the maps carefully. The resident said that vandals had been damaging signs and fences on his land and asked other residents to report anyone seen causing damage.

Action
Clerk**27.22. Planning matters.** The transactions of the Planning Committee were noted.**27.23. Correspondence.**

CPRE Field Herts Newsletter

CP

HCC Transport Facts and Road Casualty Facts leaflets

JF**27.24. Date of the next meeting Tuesday 4th February 2014.****27.25. The Chairman closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 9:24 p.m.**